

CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF CHILD LABOUR IN INDIA

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“Children are the most vulnerable group in any population and in need of the greatest social care. On account of their vulnerability and dependence, they can be exploited, ill-treated and directed into undesirable channels in the community. The state has the duty of according proper care and protection to children at all times as it is on their physical and mental well-being that the future of nation depends”.

- The preamble to the children (pledging of labour) Act, 1960

Children are the future citizens of our society. There is every need to look after them, protect them and provide them better care for their physical and mental growth. In a Welfare State it also becomes the duty of the government to promote children’s welfare through different schemes and policies, so that they will not be exposed to any sort of hazards which may damage their growth which ultimately damage the political, social as well as economic growth of society.

Childhood of human beings is of a prolonged duration, as a child has to use a lot of time in learning process. Creativity of human beings develops only through learning and acquiring skills in practical activity of social life, which Marx called man’s species – character. This issue of child labour arose during the industrial revolution in Britain. Fortunately, the state intervention, in controlling and regulating child labour in the European countries, led to the establishment of the ‘institution of education’, through schools. The role of education for human beings has been highlighted by Dr.Amarthya Sen in developing basic human capabilities that help in enhancing entitlements.

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CONCEPT OF CHILD LABOUR:

The International Labour Organization (1983) states: “child labour includes children prematurely leading adult lives, working long hours for low wages under conditions damaging to their health and their physical and mental development, sometimes separated from their opportunities that would open up for them a better future”.

Karl Marx had observed, “The result of buying children and young persons of underage by the capitalist is physical deterioration and moral degradation”.

Conventionally, a working child is defined as child in the age group of five to fourteen who is doing labour, either paid or unpaid. Child labour is a restricted definition; child work is a broad definition. One can broaden the definition of child labour or child work by defining it as a child, who is deprived of the right to education and childhood. The child population can be grouped into three categories: School going children, child labour, and nowhere children (non labour non-school goers). Adding to the last two categories (child labour and ‘nowhere’ children) gives us the number of total Child workers in a broad sense because, ‘nowhere’ children are considered as potential child labourers.

MAGNITUDE OF CHILD LABOUR IN INDIA:

Children in the age group of 0-14 constituted about 360 million and accounted for 35.3 per cent of total population. Children in the 5-14 age groups constituted about 251 million and accounted for 24.6 per cent of the population. Though there is an increase in the absolute number of children, the proportion of children in the total population declined between 1991 and 2001. According to Census of India, 2001, there were 12.26 million working children in the age group of 5-14 years as compared to 11.3 million in 1991 revealing an increasing trend in absolute numbers though the work participation rates of children (5-14) has come down from 5.4 per cent during 1991 to 5 per cent during 2001.

The magnitude of child labour in India is shown in the following Table. The number of boys in 1993-94 is 7.3 million. This number decreased to 5.37 million in 1999-00. The percentage decrease is 26.82 per cent. The number decreased further to 4.76 million i.e, 11.35 per cent over the period 1999-00. The number of girls decreased from 6.51 million in 1993-94 to 4.31 million in 2004-05. The total of child labour in 1993-94 is 13.86 million. This decreased to 9.07 million in 2004-05, showing 26.91 per cent decrease over 1993-94 and 10.46 per cent over 1999-00.

The Magnitude of Child Labour in India (in millions)

Year	Boys	Percentage decreased	Girls	Percentage decreased	All	Percentage decreased
1993-94	7.35		6.51		13.86	
1999-00	5.37	26.82	4.76	25.92	10.13	26.91
2004-05	4.76	11.35	4.31	9.47	9.07	10.46

Source: Derived from Respective Unit Level Records of NSS

The important characteristic of child labour in India is that about 90 per cent of the working children are concentrated in the rural areas. They not only work in farm sector but also in various non-farm activities in rural areas. This is also a reflection of narrow jurisdiction of the law which focuses only on visible forms of child labour in urban areas. Further, they remain as reservoir of cheap labour supply to be migrated to urban areas along with their families in the event of any distress in rural areas. Thus, the problem of child labour in India is essentially a rural problem. In 2004-05, out of 9.07 million child labourers, 7.44 million were in rural areas. Though there is a declining trend in general, magnitude of child labour in India, the concentration of child labourers in rural areas continues.

The most important category of children is one which accounts for 43 million. They are not attending schools, and is neither at 'work' nor are categorized as those attending domestic duties. "These children are, as referred to by Rodger and Standing, those in "Idleness and unemployment", which is different from 'recreation and leisure', in the sense it is "liable to be interspersed with marginal, irregular activities that provide a modicum of income" and the idleness is the "induced sense of passivity and anomie, if prolonged, cause unemployability for many forms of regular employment"⁴. Such children, without schooling, lack education, and by being idle, lack essential skills, and when adults they are almost unemployable.

These children are also called variously as "Nowhere children", "potential child labourers" and "reserve child labour force". Many NGOs, Commissions, activists and scholars bracket them as "child labourers" as they are all deprived of 'education'⁵. Hence, it is often claimed that the number of child labourer's in the country is in the range of over 60 millions.

Magnitude of child labour thus shows a declining trend. Though this is a welcome trend, the problem is with the inadequacy of coverage in the official statistics. Given the context of

globalization and declining employment growth in the country, the reduction in the magnitude of child labour could be due to reduction in general employment. However, there is need for policy advocacy on properly defining child labour from a child rights perspective in the official sources of data..

DESIGN OF THE STUDY:

Child labour is considered one of the phenomena caused by under development and poverty. Poverty which is the product of under development is the major factor for child labour. Research studies reveal that the children in developing countries, who account for 98 per cent of working children, work to survive and contribute to the survival of their families. There is no single cause for the problem of child labour. Poverty is not the only cause; it is inherent in the cycle of poverty, unemployment, underemployment and low wages, caused by inequitable distribution of resources, unleashed by a centralized and lopsided economy and the backward nature of agriculture.

India has all along been following a proactive policy in the matter of tackling the problem of child labour. India has always stood for constitutional, statutory and development measures required to eliminate child labour. The Indian constitution has consciously incorporated provisions to secure compulsory universal elementary education as well as labour protection for children. Labour Commission in India has gone into the problems of child labour and has made extensive recommendations. In spite of all these efforts the problem of child labour is everywhere.

NEED FOR THE STUDY:

Many research studies have been conducted at macro and micro level in recent years, but very little work has been done on the causes and consequences of child labour in the State of Andhra Pradesh in general and of Prakasam district in particular. In the absence of such studies, an attempt is made to study the causes and consequences of child labour in the Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To study the magnitude of the child labour in India and in the State of Andhra Pradesh.
2. To find out the socio- economic causes of child labour in India.
3. To examine the policy initiatives relating to child labour in India.
4. To probe into the working conditions, job security and exploitation of child labourers by their employers in Prakasam district

5. To identify the causes and consequences of child labour in Prakasam district, and
6. To identify the main problem and offer appropriate suggestions to eliminate child labour.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:

The change in the economic conditions of the families of the child labourers and the households is an important factor for generalization of the findings of the study. The economic conditions, education status, the cycle of poverty, unemployment, underemployment and low wages differ from region to region. Since the present study is based on the smaller size of sample, one cannot claim that this study is completely perfect. The main findings, which are confined to Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh, cannot be generalized and similar studies on wider scales are to be conducted. In view of the recall lapses on the part of the respondents, the information gathered cannot be treated as totally free from errors. However, efforts are made to collect reasonably satisfactory information from sample respondents by visiting them at repeated intervals and through checks and counter checks while canvassing the schedules. This is another serious limitation of the study. In spite of all these limitations, the results of the study may be generalized for the entire study area and in particular different regions in India with similar socio-economic conditions.

The methodology of the study is as follows;

SAMPLE DESIGN:

The basis of the study is a sample survey. The stratified survey method has been used while drawing samples. Prakasam district, which is divided into three revenue divisions; i.e., Ongole, Kandukur and Markapur, is just one example of incidence of child labour. In each division two revenue mandals were chosen i.e., one urban and another is rural for comprehensive study. Mandal wise list of child labour is obtained from the available records of the project officer (PO) Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA), Ongole in Prakasam district. Using simple random sampling technique, 15 per cent of the child labour and child labour households in each revenue mandal are selected for the study. Thus, the study is confined to 318 child labour households and child labourers in the Prakasam district. The sample design in the study area is given below.

Sample design in selected mandals

SlNo.	Revenue Division	Selected Mandals	No. of Child labourers in the mandal	Sample (15%) of total child labour
1	Ongole	Chimakurthi(Rural)	282	42
		Ongole (Urban)	181	27
2	Kandukur	Kanigiri (Rural)	577	87
		Kandukur (Urban)	198	30
3	Markapur	Yerragondapalem (Rural)	647	97
		Markapuram (Urban)	235	35
Total			2120	318

Source: Records of Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, Ongole

DATA BASE:

The study is based on both primary data and secondary data. The primary data is collected from the sample child workers and households of child workers with help of schedules. Proper care is taken to explain different aspects in schedules to elicit truthful information from the households and child workers. The schedules are pre tested before conducting the field survey.

TOOLS OF ANALYSIS:

Suitable and appropriate statistical tools and mathematical devices like averages, percentages, analysis of variance, t- test, Chisquare tests are employed while tabulating, analyzing and interpreting the data. Maps, graphs and diagrams are also used to present the facts and figures clearly.

CHILD LABOUR IN PRAKASAM DISTRICT:

Yerragondpalem, Pullalacheruvu, Tripuranthakam, Pedaraveedu, Dornala and Ardhaveedu mandals are backward mandals in Prakasam district which are border to Nalamala forest. The 9-14 years age group tribal girl children are going to forest for firewood and cattle feed like green grass and forest products (like honey, soap nuts etc.) for their needs. These mandals are drought affected areas, early child marriages are frequently happening in these mandals. Children in the age group of 9-14 are involved in slate industry and quarries as labour in Donakonda, Markapur, Konakanamitla and Tarlupadu mandals. More number of child workers are engaged in agricultural activities in Darsi, Kurichedu, Talluru, Ponnaluru,

Kandukur, Tangutur and Mundlamur mandals. Girl children are going to Tobacco companies for grading.

More number of girl children are migrating to various places in the state and country as child labour in Railway stations, canteens, brick – kilns from Marripudi, C.S.Puram, Veligandla, Kanigiri and Podili mandals. The children in the age group of 9-14 from Korisipadu, Ongole, and Kandukur mandals are working in hotels, dabhas, mechanic sheds and auto garages as child labour.

MAIN FINDINGS:

1. The present study reveals that more number of child labour households belong to nuclear family, and these social status explains that 94 per cent of sample households belongs to Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes and Backward class categories. More than 80 per cent of sample child labour household have entered the work below the age of 14 years, and most of them are involved in agricultural labour activity.
2. The study also identifies that more number of child labour households and their wives are illiterates. The child labour households (more than 75per cent) are landless and they are worried with number of problems due to agricultural price falling and price inflation. The average monthly income is very low and the expenditure is very high. This forced them to engage their children at work.
3. Most of child labour households do not have access to institutional credit to meet their consumption expenditure of social functions and medical expenses etc., they borrow huge amount for non institutional agencies and are trapped in debt. More than 60 per cent of child labour households are suffering severe debt trap. This is another reason to place their children at work. Another important reason for child labour is migration of child labour households in search of employment opportunities.
4. Most of the child labour households are engaging their children at work places to increase their family income and to survive their family economically and socially. Most of the child labourers are from illiterate families and due to ignorance of parents. The study also reveals that 92 per cent of child labour households are unable to send their children to school due to inaccessibility of schooling facility and non existence of provision for compulsory education.
5. The study highlights that due to lack of employment opportunities and proper legislation and policy, and the consequent engagement of children in work. Most of the child labour households (98per cent) are not aware of child labour Laws. They are

fascinated towards migration to urban areas for one reason or other, unable to find suitable job and this situation also forced them to engage their children at work.

6. The employers are taking the child workers to task, when they are absent from the work. Their wages are cut and their workload is increased. More than 60 per cent of the sample child workers experienced physical beating at work places, affecting the safety, security and mental condition of the children.
7. Children are facing a number of problems to reach the work place as most of them are going by on foot only. 23 per cent of sample child workers are working 8 hours a day whereas more than 76 per cent are working more than 12 hours a day. The monthly income of child workers is very low even they work for more hours. Most of them are working to assist their family. Children are involved in carrying heavy loads and exposed to dust, fire, gas and loud noise. This situation is seriously affecting the health of the children.
8. The working children having poor relations with their employers due to high work intensity. They are living in bad working conditions and experiencing physical and verbal abuse from their employers. More than 50 per cent of sample child labourers are unable to sleep comfortably, and are sleeping either at employer's house or at work place. More number of sample child labours do not have interest to continue in the same job for longer period, due to lack of work satisfaction. Low pay and low business returns and no guarantee for continuing in the present job for the longer period are the other reasons for the change of the job.

CAUSES OF CHILD LABOUR AND SUGGESTIONS TO ERADICATE CHILD LABOUR

The main reason for existence of child labour as per the study is low levels of family income, poverty and indebtedness. According to a new Oxford University study 55 per cent of India's population 1.1 billion or 645 million people, are living in poverty. Using a newly developed index, the study found that about 1/3 of World's poor live in India. The government should concentrate seriously on formulating and implementing the anti-poverty programmes. A general raise of the population above the poverty line will lead to progressive elimination of poverty. Measures should be taken to promote employment opportunities in rural and urban areas. Successful implementation of all these programmes is essential. When the employment opportunities are generated for the adults and they are rewarded more fairly to raise their standard of living, children will no longer be required to work.

Most the child labour parents are illiterates especially the mothers of working children. Illiteracy of the parents is a responsible factor for the development of child labour. The illiteracy of the parents should be tackled through programmes like the total literacy campaigns at village, mandal and district levels, which provide large reservations of child labour. Another important factor related to the elimination of child labour is the provision of free and compulsory primary education to all sections of the rural and urban population. Integration to the formal school system has been shown to have significant inverse correlation with the incidence of child labour. There is a little resistance to school enrolment from the parents of working children. Specific interventions of the state are required to ensure that procedures relating to admissions in the schools do not become impediments to the universalization of primary education.

The study also identifies the land owning position of child labour households, and caste status is also responsible factors for the incidence of child labour. More number (more than 75 per cent) of the sample child labour households are landless labours. They are able to increase their income levels if the government implements the land reforms successfully. Another problem identified with regard to child labour households with land below three acres is that frequent failure of the crops frequently. Government should take initiative in design crop insurance schemes for the benefit of these sections. There is an urgent need to develop irrigation facilities through sources various such as canals and bore wells and thereby boost the agricultural output leading to generation of more income and employment. As Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes and Backward class social group child labour households are do not have land, sufficient measures should be taken to distribute surplus land to these disadvantaged social groups.

The study identified that more number of sample households do not have access to institutional finance to meet their family expenditure. As a result they are entering into the clutches of money lenders and micro financiers. Their interest rates are very high compared to bank rate of interest. The money lender and micro financiers are fully benefited and the receiver of the loan is heavily exploited. This is the one of the reasons for engaging the children at work. Government should instruct the institutional agencies to cater the needs of these sections of people as an important measure to eliminate child labour. The child labour households and employers of child labour are not aware of child labour legislation. It is true that various child labour laws have been enacted, but, enforcement machinery is both inactive and inadequate. In this context the judiciary should play a crucial role in augmenting

the efforts of all concerned for elimination of child labour. People especially employers and the parents of the children should be made aware of the existing laws concerning child labour and the penalties should be imposed upon people flouting laws. Measures should be taken for stricter implementation of these laws. The lapses of employers in implementing legislative and other provisions regarding working children should be widely publicised in order to build a strong opinion against defaulters. Further the World Trade Organization (WTO) should enforce restrictions on all the firms engaging child labour by imposing trade sanctions.

The Child Labour Act 1986 banned the employment of children below 14 years in certain industries which are hazardous. According to this Act all the children below 14 years working in different sectors will not come under Child Labour Act. This is creating lot of confusion in the stage of collecting census data of working children. Though more number of children are working in agricultural sector, they were not figured in the census data. Due to this reason the census data is not exactly matching with the occupations listed in hazardous under the Child Labour Act. A clear segregation of data into hazardous and non-hazardous occupations has to be done to have broad estimation of children working in different occupations.

Lack of awareness among the parents, employers and society in general about the problem of child labour is the major concern. There is a need to develop awareness in the child workers, their parents and employers of the damage the early work can cause to the society, young earners and their generations to come. They should be informed about the benefits of the alternative solutions. They should be explained the difference between right, educational work on one hand and exploitative drudgery on the other hand. For a wider publicity of this message, mass media should be used giving regular information and running educational campaigns. Public lectures can also be organized with more emphasis on the problem and its repercussions.

Child labour is most common in backward economies where, participation of children in the labour market is an important component of social structure. The social phenomenon is a reflection of the economic phenomenon and vice-versa. Therefore, the solution to the problem lies in the planned development of society. The elimination of child labour cannot be achieved in isolation, but would be an integral part of the other socio-economic changes. Mechanization, which needs more skilled workers, would discourage child workers and encourage them to opt for education and skilled training. Child labour cannot be approached as an isolated problem. It is a complex socio – economic, demographic phenomenon, which

can be reduced and eliminated by multiplicity of actions both by government and public, at social as well as individual levels. The aim of the social policies should be to reduce the intensity of child labour in the short - term and eradicate the child labour in long term planning.